



MALAYALAM BORROWINGS FROM THE PORTUGUESE

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INTRODUCTION

Portuguese was the first European language with which the Malayalam speaking people of south India came into contact. Even though the Portuguese period in Kerala was comparatively short the influence on its language of the people was remarkable.

Portuguese was spoken in its pure or corrupt form throughout the whole of India, Malaysia, Pegu, Burma, Siam, Tonquin, Cochin-China, China, Kamaran in Persia, Basra of Turkey and Mecca in Arabia. It was spoken not only by the Portuguese and their descendants but by Hindus, Muslims, Jews, and by Europeans of other nationalities in their intercourse with one another or with the indigenous people. It was employed by the Dutch missionaries in their own dominions and, even to this day, English, Protestant missionaries make use of it in Ceylon. It was therefore for a long time the *Lingua Franca* of the East¹.

It is true that today the radius of the circulation of Portuguese in Asia is no longer what it used to be; it is much reduced. It has ceased to be the *Lingua Franca*, and of its several dialects, some are extinct, others are in *articulo mortis*, and it may well be that yet others shall after the lapse of ages, have entirely disappeared, perhaps the Portuguese shall have ceased to be spoken in the East. The words from the beautiful tongue of Luis Vaz de Camões, adopted and naturalized in a hundred and one of the vernaculars of the East will continue to exist as long as the vernaculars themselves endure and stand as living and abiding monuments of the Portuguese domination and civilization to those parts².

Thanks to Sebastião Rodolfo Dalgado who in 1913, published his outstanding dictionary entitled *Influência do Vocabulário Português em Linguas Asiáticas* and Anthony Xavier Soares who brought out an enlarged edition of Dalgado's dictionary in 1936 under the title *Portuguese vocables in Asiatic languages*. We are provided with the most comprehensive source for loan words from the Portuguese in South Indian Languages. So far studies dealing with Malayalam Borrowings from the Portuguese the data supplied by Dalgado and Soares serve as an excellent starting point.

João de Barros the Portuguese historian explained language as an instrument of missionary work and simultaneously bartering cultural interaction. During the Sixteenth century the Portuguese language laboriously polished and enriched by the fertile work of humanists reached a new dimension. In 1539 a catechism of first letters entitled *A Grammar of the Portuguese Language* is published from Lisbon. It was followed by a summary of the

Christian Doctrine, *A Grammar and Dialogue on praise of our Language* in 1540³.

Antonio da Silva Rego analysed old relations and works on local life and religion of Malabar which are being published in his work *Trents Impact on the Portuguese Patronage Missions*⁴. They all show a concern for a knowledge of the populations and their mentality. It is also known that Father Henriques made a grammar on the Tamil language and vocabulary in which he was engaged from 1548 to 1566. He also wrote to St. Ignatius at Rome on 21st November 1549 that "A Malabar art is now ready, by means of which the language can be easily learnt and it will be learnt in the manner as they speak the language"⁵.

While in the case of Tamil, sister language of Malayalam, we have a few studies at our disposal which are devoted to its linguistic contact with Portuguese⁶. No attempts have to my knowledge, been made on the borrowings of Malayalam language except a paper on "the *Portuguese in Malayalam literature*" presented at an international seminar in Sorbonne University, Paris wherein Dr. K J John has mentioned the Malayalam words collected by Vasco de Gama at the end of the fifteenth century during his first voyage to Calicut⁷.

In this paper an attempt is made to bring out one hundred and fifty six Portuguese loan words in Malayalam. The whole of Malayalam borrowings from Portuguese can be divided into two distinct groups; a) Christian expressions and terms, and b) cultural words in general. Thereby the latter group comprises words belonging to the following spheres viz.

- Commerce and industry
- House(outside and inside)
- Dishes ,tools and instruments
- Shoes, clothes and bathroom items
- Food, flora, fauna and various other items

Majority of the Malayalam borrowings from the Portuguese are church related. From the sixteenth century onwards missionaries were trying for apt Malayalam words for the European Christian terms and usages. They introduced Portuguese and Latin words and now they have become an integral part of church vocabulary.

In this respect I may mention *Kraistava Sabdha Kosam* By Dr. George Kurukkoor which is a valuable source book⁸. In this paper I am enlisting the Malayalam loan words from the Portuguese which indirectly tell us the influence of Portuguese

culture in our day to day life and Catholic religious practices.

Portuguese	Malayalam	Meaning or English Equivalent
Aia	Aya	Nurse maid
Alfandega	Alppandi (Chungam)	Customs duties
Alfinete	Alpine	Breast Pin
Alho	Ullhi	Giant Garlic
Almadia	Olamari	A kind of Ship
Altar	Althara	High Altar
Amarra	Amaram	Cable (of a ship or boat)
Amora	Amara	Mulberry tree
Ananás (z)	Ananas	Pineapple
Anjo	Anju	Angel
Apóstolo	Appostalan	Apostle
Armário	Alamara (alamari)	Cupboard
Arratel	Rattel	A pound of 12 ounces
Assistente	Astenti (ch)	Assistant priest
ata	attha	Custard apple
auditor	Ovudotor	One who examines the accounts
Bacia	Vassi	Dinner Plate, Vessel
Balde	Baldi	Bucket
Banco (bench)	Banco	Bench
Banquete	Bankethi	Banquet
Barca	Varkkasu	Bark, a sea boat
Batata	Batata	Potato
Batel	Vattela	A sea boat
Bateria	Batheri	Battery
Bentinho	Ventinha(ch)	A scapular (religious amulet)
Benzer	Venchirikka	To bless
Bisagra	Visagari	A hinge
Biscoito	Biskottu (biskattu)	Biscuit
Bucha	Bucca	Cork
Caderia	Kasera	Chair
Cafre	Kappiri	Negro
Caju (Brazilian acaju)	Kasu	Cashew tree
Calafete	Kalvethi	Calker
Calcao	Kalusam	Shorts
Camisa	Kamis	Shirt
Canal	Canal	Canal
Capar	Kapparikka	To Castrate
Capear	Capyar	Sacristan (One who covers ceremonial vestment on the priest)
Capela	Cappela	Chapel
Capelão	Cappalon	Chaplain
Capitão	Kappithan	Captain

Capuz	Kappus	Hood
Carta	Kathu	Letter
Católico	Kattolikkan	A catholic
Cebola	Savala	Large Onion
Cemitério	Cemetheri	Burial ground
Cepilho	Chippuli	A plane used by joiners
Chapa	Chappa	A thin metal plate
Charuto	Churuttu	Cigar
Chave	Chavi	key
Chavela	Savela	The peg of a wain beam
Cinzel	Chinter	Burnishing chisel
Coche	Kochu	Coach
Colher	Koleri	Trowel
Comandante	Kommantar	Commander
Commadre	Commathiri	God mother
Confraria	Combraria	Brotherhood
Contas	Konta	Beads of rosary
Convento	Convenda	Monastery
Copo	Coppa	A cup
Coque	Cokky	Cook
Corda	Koratavu	Rope, Whip
Couro	Koora	Tanned leather
Couve	Govi	Cabbage
Cozinha	Kusinha	Kitchen
Cruz	Curuz	Cross
Dalmathica	Dalmathi	A Church vestment
Diabo	Diyabu	Devil
Eleitor	Elathor	Elector
Escola	Iskul	School
Eseritor	Escritor	Writer
Esmolar	Esmol	Alms
Esterar	Istri	Pressing iron
Filiad	Peelas mon or mol	Adopted son or daughter
Fita	Peetha	Ribbon
Foquet	Patakkam	Chinese Cracker
Forma	Borma	Baker's oven
Frances	Parantiriyis	French
Garfo	Karppu	A fork
General	General	General
Governador	Gavarnador	Governor
Grade	Kirati	Grade, lattice, railing
Gudão	Gudam	Warehouse for goods and stores
Hospital	Aspatri (asupatri)	Hospital
Hostia	Osti	Consecrated water
Imperador	Emprador	Emperor
Inglês	Inglisu	English
Jangada	Changadam	Ferry boat
Jarra	Chara	A Jar

Janela	Jenala	Window
Ladainha	Laseenja	Recital of prayers
Lanterna	Lanter (rantal)	Lantern
Lenco	Lesu	A handkerchief
Leilão	Lelam or elam	Auction sale advertisement
Lista	Lista	List
Loba	Lova (loha)	A wide cassock
Manchua	Machua	Small vessel of recreation
Madrinha	Madrinhamma	Godmother
Mesa	Mesa	A Table
Mestre	Mestri, mestari	Foreman
Molengu	Moyanthu	Lazy person
Molagueta	Molegu	Red chilly
Navalha	Novali	A clasp-knife razor
Nave	Nave	Middle part of church
Novena	Novana	Nine devotional prayers
Office	Oppeece	Office of the head
Padre	Padiri	Clergyman, Parish priest
Padrinho	Padrinhappan	Godfather
Paga	Pagadi	A type of tax
Pagamento	Pagamenth	Payment
Palangana	Pingani	A flat dish
Pangaio	Pankayam	A two mastered barage with lanteen sails
Papa	Paappa	The Pope
Papaia	Papaya	A kind of melon
Passar	Pasaram	To Transfer
Pateca	Vattaka	Watermelon
Pato	Patha	Goose
Pedreiro	Periteri	Stone mason, masonry
Pêra	Pera	Guava
Pena	Pena	Quill, Writing pen
Picão	Pikkam (pikkasu)	Mason's pickaxe
Pinha	Pinja	Pine wood
Pintar	Pintarikka	To paint
Pipa	Pippa	Cask
Pistol	Pistal	Pistol
polícia	Police	Police
Porco	Porkku	A Pig
Praga	Prakuka	To curse
Presidente	Presedenthi	President
Prumo	Prumakatta	Plumb bob
Rabeca	Ravekka	A receipt
Recibo	Rasithi	Fiddle
Registro	Registor	Record
Reliquia	Arulikka	Relic of saints
Relógio	Orijikka	Watch, clock
Rendo	Renda	Embroidery

Ronda	Rontu (rontu chuttuka)	The round
Salada	Salladu	Salad
Sacrari	Sacrari	Sanctuary
Sopa	Soop	Soup
Sorte	Sodathi	Lottery
Tabaco	Tambakku	Tobacco
Tambler	Tambler	Drinking vessel
Tambor	Tambor	A drum
Tarifa	Tarippu	Tariff
Tenaz	Tanassu	Pincers, Tweezers
Tesoureiro	Teserar	Treasurer
Toalha	Tuvala	Towel, handkerchief
Tres	Tres	A fraction of reas
Tronco	Turunka	Jail
Varra	Vara	A linear measure
Veludo	Villutu (Villissu)	Velvet
Vender	Vender	Sale agent
Verruma	Veruma	A gimlet
Via sacra	Viasacra	Way of the cross
Vinjo	Vinju	Wine

In conclusion, it should be pointed out that there was no sufficient vocabulary in the sixteenth century Malayalam for Christian terms and usages as in the fully developed Portuguese of the period. As a result many Portuguese words crept into the translation and these words became an integral part of modern Malayalam language and vocabulary.

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